

In this book, you will find a number of practical hints on how to study well. Of course, the students will read them faithfully. But, many of them, even after reading, are sure to ask the same questions that have been answered here. What does it show? Obviously, they would not have read the book with due attention. So, we hope the students will be more attentive.

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LETTER TO A STUDENT

Swami Purushottamananda



**RAMAKRISHNA MATH
BANGALORE**

'LETTER TO A STUDENT'

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PREFACE

A letter is a communication written by one person to another, to convey a message or ideas. But, there are letters and letters! If some have become immortal in the annals of literature, there are others that have inspired people and transformed their lives.

Here is a letter addressed to you, the student. If you are really a 'student', deeply interested in learning, in acquiring knowledge that can enrich your life, this letter can do just that for you.

But—and it is a big BUT—don't you know that, 'One can take a horse to a pond, but none can make it drink'? So, if you do not open out your mind, your heart, to the constructive and

practical ideas poured out here, none can help you; no, not even God!

You are perhaps aware that this book was originally written in Kannada. The response and reaction from the student community was simply overwhelming! The booklet had to be reprinted twice in large numbers within months! Then, there arose a persistent demand for an English translation or version from the students whose knowledge of Kannada was poor or next to nothing. The result is this booklet, now in your hands. The original author, Swami Purushottamanandaji, has himself rewritten it in English for your sake. It is now up to you to make the most of it. Try!

Swami Harshananda

LETTER TO A STUDENT

Dear Somashekhar,

Received your letter. I can well understand your helplessness.

It is true that being a student of a rural school you have to face many inconveniences. But you must remember that you have many advantages too. In towns and cities, the havoc created by television, cinema, hotels and blaring loudspeakers much disturbs the studies of students. On the other hand, the uncontaminated atmosphere and tranquil surroundings of the villages make them ideal for studies with good concentration. Though the students in cities have various facilities,

the possibility of their falling prey to harmful distractions is high. You must be knowing how parents and teachers have to constantly keep vigil and protect them from lurking dangers.

Now, coming to your problem—you have written, 'I am now in the tenth standard; the lessons have commenced, but I am unable to understand many of them'. Another student also has written to me that his teachers do not teach properly. That is his misfortune. At least you are lucky that you have good teachers.

Well, here are a few suggestions that will, I hope, help you to understand the lessons better and pass the exams successfully.

1. First and foremost—as soon

as you wake up, have a wash and offer 'pranams' to God and to your parents. Your daily routine should begin with this. Never doubt the truth that it is the blessings of God and elders that brings success to your endeavours. You may ask, 'When the right endeavours themselves can bring the desired results, what is the necessity of blessings?' But you must know that those blessings will endow you with the right state of mind to undertake your work. You might not realize this until you grow older. But for now, you just believe in these words of wise people. There is another interesting point: you do not have to ask them for their blessings. When you bow down to God and elders with

sincere devotion, the thought—‘May he be blessed!’—arises spontaneously in their hearts. This is the law.

2. Let me now tell you about the significance of having a time-table. You know pretty well how prayer, classes and games are all accommodated in your school hours within regular periods and so many lessons are covered. The secret behind this is the time-table. Yet, students these days return home from school and instead of revising the lessons, while away their time in only playing, watching the television, reading novels and roaming about. When the exams approach near, they try to study all the texts together, get tensed up and feel miserable. This is not how students

and studies ought to be. Those who neglect their studies do not deserve to be called students. However, there are some students, who, either with the guidance of their parents and teachers or by themselves, being disciplined and sincere, study regularly according to a time-table and proceed with the lessons easily. You too must learn this tact. Find out how much of time you are left with, apart from your school hours. Sundays and half of Saturdays are yours, as also the let-off hours. If you can intelligently utilize every minute of the time thus given to you, not only will you be able to revise all the lessons but you will truly build up a great personality.

It is impossible to make good use

of time without a time-table. How should you draw a time-table? First of all, fix up the hours of going to bed and waking up. If these timings change, your time-table will be in vain. Being young, it is best for you to go to bed at ten in the night and wake up at five in the morning. A sound sleep at night is most essential for your mind to be calm, steady and fresh throughout the day. If you utilise the seventeen hours of the day efficiently you can do wonders and if you give sufficient work to your body and mind, you can be sure of enjoying undisturbed sleep during the night.

Between the hours when you wake up in the morning and go to bed at night, you must have time for your

prayers, studies and all other activities. For this you must prepare a suitable time-table yourself. Or you may take the help of your teachers in this regard.

3. After your bath you should allot some time—ten minutes or half an hour, as much as you are capable of—for chanting of 'stotras', prayers and meditation. This is very helpful in developing a balanced and healthy mind. You must also pray to God like this before going to bed: 'O Lord, with your grace, I have been able to utilise this day worthily. Yet there might have been some short-comings. Bless me with strength and discrimination to overcome my faults and lead me forward.' Pray from the bottom of your heart and God will certainly

answer your prayers. What more? You can witness your mind growing stronger day by day.

4. I have mentioned about bath—please do not ever neglect this. As sweat forms and evaporates during the course of the day, the salts contained in it dry up and get deposited on the skin. Dust gets added to this. If you do not care to wash and clean your body and hair properly, the mind will get restless and slowly loses its vigour. This will damage both your ability to study and to remember whatever is studied.

It is better to cultivate the habit of taking bath in the morning and again in the evening. Bathing in cold water is best; if this is not possible,

use luke-warm water, but, never hot water. If you want to get used to cold water, better start during summer. There are two great advantages of bathing in cold water: firstly, the body and mind will remain active and fresh. Secondly, this is very helpful for the observance of 'brahmacharya'.

5. Now, coming to the point of time-table: I would like to make a small suggestion here. You must make it a point to read before-hand all the lessons which are taught each day in the school. If you do so, you will be able to grasp the subject well when the teacher explains it. You will come to understand the portions that you had not understood when you read the lesson by yourself. With your doubts

now cleared, you can revise these lessons at home in the evenings. So, prepare before going to school and revise after returning home. Please make an experiment with this for just three months. You will be surprised with the results. If you can continue the practice right through the year with a little grit and determination, neither will the lessons bore you, nor will the exams seem strenuous.

But, you must know that if you vow to stick on to this practice strictly, you cannot afford to waste time in roaming about, watching television for hours and chatting with friends. You will have to be like one observing a vow, until the annual exams are over. Indeed, education is a vow to be

fulfilled. So, please know that you are under a pledge. The truth is this—teachers are bound to the oath of imparting knowledge and students, of receiving it and making it their own through deep study. Nothing can be achieved without a strong will-power.

6. One more word regarding the time-table. You should draw up special time-tables from time to time, apart from the regular one, to utilise the extra time in hand, during special holidays like festivals, Christmas, etc.

7. It is better if others at home are informed about your time-table, so that they will not disturb you with other jobs during your study-hours. When you once sit down to study, you should get immersed in it for at

least an hour without getting up or peeping out of the window. This might be difficult at first, but if you persist with your efforts, both your body and mind will gradually come fully under your control. At the end of an hour, leave your seat, stroll about in the open air, drink a glass of water and come back to your studies. Drinking water now and then improves the flow of blood, thereby activating the mind.

8. You are likely to come across difficult words while reading. So always keep a dictionary with you. If you learn the correct usage of every word, your command over the language will grow, making your study increasingly fruitful. If the meanings of the words are well understood, the contents

will be understood more clearly; then, enthusiasm to read and assimilate more and more will be naturally created. In this way, repeatedly revise your lessons —read and understand, understand and read. This is the secret to master the lessons. There are many students who want to know the technique of improving their memory. This is best done by understanding the lessons clearly, reading them repeatedly and also practising them in writing. I shall let you know some more ideas by and by.

9. I hope you do have a table and chair. If not, you should at least have a small desk. Make sure that there is appropriate distance between your eyes and the desk.

Keeping your face close to the book will strain eyes and mind quickly and your studies will suffer.

10. Next, please see that you use good pens and pencils. It is advisable to have two good pens with you. Never let others use them. The style of holding a pen varies from person to person. So you can guess the consequence of lending your pens to others. You will have to practise writing with a new pen for a few days before you can use it comfortably. It is possible to maintain a good handwriting even while writing with speed, only with a good pen. The examiners will expect your papers to be neat and legibly written. If your answers are neat, they will gladly award more

marks, whereas if your writings are clumsy, you might lose even the marks that are rightly due to you. Therefore pay attention to your writing. Good handwriting demands five important things:

1. The letters must be well-formed.
2. There should not be any blots and scratches.
3. There must be no spelling mistakes.
4. Lines must be straight.
5. Sentences must be grammatically correct.

You should know that both reading and writing constitute your study. Accuracy in writing is as important as discreet reading. Since you have to answer all the questions within a fixed

time, should you not practise fast writing? You must practise a little writing every day without fail.

11. I have to say a couple of words about practising writing. Make it a habit to practise copy-writing. I still remember our teacher making us practise copy-writing everyday when I was a student. I remember that well, because he used to put his cane to good use during the process! There were beatings each time—when the letters were not neat, when there were mistakes. When the lines were not straight, when the letters were uneven in size, when the spacing between words was not proper, when letters were found tumbling over each other; and other instances were when the

copy-writing book was not tidy or when copy-writing was not done at all—that called for additional beating! So there would be beatings and beatings for one fault or the other. Thus did we learn our lessons! Of course we were then angry with the teacher for flourishing his cane on us, but now I remember him with gratitude.

You do not have to practise copy-writing by writing the same line over and over again like primary school children. Daily write a couple of paragraphs from your text books in each of the languages you have to study. You yourself try to judge if the letters are neat and the lines are straight and check for mistakes with the help of the text. You will realise how careful

one has to be even to copy what is given, correctly.

That is about copy-writing. You also have to develop the ability of writing about a topic on your own. You can take the help of your text-book for this. Read through a whole lesson carefully and reflect upon the contents. Then close the book and write it in your own words. Now compare and contrast what you have written with the text. Also check if the letters are well written, the lines are straight and how many times you have blundered and struck off what was written. Note down the time you took to write the whole thing. The next time when you write something try to avoid all the mistakes committed earlier. With this

sort of practice, you will be able to write both neatly and correctly in the exams.

12. Studying to fare well in the exams is as important as studying to gain knowledge. One may be intelligent and may have knowledge. But what beauty is there if he fails in the exams? For success in the exams, you should pay equal attention to all the subjects. You have written that mathematics and science do not interest you much. But you should *evoke* interest and study them for the sake of the exams at least. You will have to take more interest in subjects that you find difficult. You should, with extra efforts, try to assimilate those portions with the help of your teachers or intelligent

classmates. Is not education equal to a penance? You must strive hard.

It is true that you will have to memorize certain portions. But never attempt to learn by-heart whole lessons. Some students very 'bravely' try to pass exams by mugging-up notes—that too not their own! Do not ever attempt to do this. If you indeed understand each and every word of the lessons, they will remain rooted in your memory better than with attempt at mugging-up.

13. There is yet another way of retaining the lessons in memory. On Sundays and other holidays you should gather three or four of your classmates for group study; and after that, hold group discussions and exchange

thoughts. Thereby each one of you will be sharing what he knows with the others and the topics discussed will get registered in your minds. Hearing is always very effective. You might have seen many men and women who would have gathered a lot of information just by listening to discourses and 'harikatha-puranas'. Therefore cultivate the habit of discussing the lessons with your classmates. What you read you may not remember, but whatever you hear from others will generally get imprinted in the mind. And again, studying and discussing in a group arouses enthusiasm. Then the mind becomes energetic and your studies will prove more fruitful. But beware of wasting time in idle talk.

Because when friends gather...you know what happens!

14. I have yet to tell you a very important point. Always sit in one of the benches in the front during the classes. Keep your eyes and ears fixed wholly on the teacher and listen attentively to what he says. Pleased with your sincerity he too will bestow more attention on you. Be polite and faithful with regard to all your teachers. Whatever be the comments passed by other students against teachers, never get influenced or perturbed. However stern a teacher might be, if you behave respectfully, he will be kind and considerate towards you.

There are some students who say—'Knowing the personal life of

certain teachers, we do not feel like respecting them'. But let me tell you one thing—never try to know about the personal lives of such teachers. Do not hear what other students speak about such matters. Look upon all your teachers with the feeling that in their hearts resides the same Eternal Teacher—Sacchidananda Guru. Though you may find this difficult to understand, *believe* in these words of wisdom and act accordingly. This feeling will definitely help you and do immense good to you.

15. Some students approach me during the months of February and March and ask me how they can develop concentration. They say that they want to control the mind and

some say they want to practise meditation. Is it not wonderful?! But what they actually want to know is whether there is some technique whereby the whole lot of lessons, neglected throughout the year, can be miraculously taken into the brain at one stroke! But, alas, there is no such miracle in the world. The secret of good memory-power is, repeated reading and understanding, recollecting and re-reading what is forgotten. Bhagavadgita says that concentration is achieved by perseverance and practice. What is perseverance? It is to attempt again and again, day after day. The mind will naturally become concentrated if you study systematically every day. The power produced by practice is immense.

Yet another important requisite in developing concentration is to develop a *liking* for your studies. You must love your lessons. Your mind will get concentrated in whatever you truly love. This is a natural law. You should therefore cultivate a liking for your lessons. This will help you to concentrate on them during your studies.

16. These are some of the things directly related to your studies. There are certain other things that need your attention. Firstly, food. Eating the proper quantity of nutritious food at the proper hours keeps your mind calm and fresh. Over-eating induces sleep, eating less causes exhaustion. Irregular intake of food robs the mind of its calmness.

17. Now, about exercise for the body. Let those who play do so. But you either practise 'Yogasanas' or do free-hand exercises. It is sufficient if within three-fourths of an hour every limb of your body is exercised. Never overdo exercises nor discontinue their practice. Always remember this counsel regarding exercises.

18. You can avoid many diseases by always drinking boiled and cooled water. Diseases are a major obstacle in the path of your progress. They cripple the enthusiasm of the mind and the body. So beware!

19. Now, this is another very important point that you have to note—enthusiasm! Be ever filled with zeal! Ceaseless enthusiasm! It is this

that makes us victorious in all walks of life. You should become a spring of unceasing enthusiasm. Your elders should have created this enthusiasm in you by encouraging you. But when most of the elders are weighed down by their own problems and expect encouragement themselves, how will they provide you with enthusiasm? Therefore you will have to bring it out from within yourself.

You can resort to another plan for this. Order yourself thus: 'In the coming exams I shall score more marks than my friends and pass creditably'. This will undoubtedly build up determination in you.

In effect, you should be enthusiastic like a bouncing ball and not

be like soaked flattened-rice! Be cheerful always. If you wear a long face with a frown, it will put out even the little enthusiasm that you have. If you try to wear a beaming countenance, by and by your enthusiasm will multiply and make you the very image of infinite energy, vitality and zest. As a result, your studies will become enjoyable and successful. Please see that the fountain of your enthusiasm springs higher and higher with each successive day.

Another word about zeal—if the mind is free from sleepiness, it remains wide-awake and active. Thereby it would naturally remain enthusiastic. This enthusiasm will in turn fight away drowsiness and keep your mind alert.

From this observation do you not realise that, as a result of guarding your enthusiasm, your mind will always remain lively?

You might have seen many students drink coffee or tea from time to time in order to stay awake. But gradually the coffee or tea will get 'suited' to your constitution and that itself will induce sleep! So, the best way of maintaining enthusiasm is to develop the ambition of scoring high marks and cultivate a healthy competitive spirit.

20. Do you know of an enemy in your path? It is fear: 'Examination-fear'! This attacks most of the students. Under its stress, those who are weak become victims of fever and suffer

from vomiting and loose-motions. The word 'Examination fever' has been specially coined for this 'disease'. The basic reason for this is nothing but fear of the exams. Even the students who have studied well and prepared well become nervous at the time of exams. Then what to speak of other students? So, to get out of this fear, tell yourself—'What will I gain by feeling afraid? I will only fall sick. Should I get panicky for the sake of falling sick? Never! I shall study well and face the exams boldly.'

Here lies the solution to examination fear. What is it? Studying right from the beginning of the year systematically. A regular, disciplined student need not fear the exams. Yet,

fear is inherent in man. So, with all your studies you may experience fear. There are possibilities of fear gripping the mind, when you see other lazy students of your class panic—'Oh! the exams are fast approaching, my revision is not yet over. What shall I do?' But know for sure that if you shelter this fear, it will deprive your mind and body of their strength. The only result can be this—you will seem to forget all that you have studied while writing the exam. It is this fear that makes you write confused answers.

Therefore, it is important to root out the fear-complex lurking in your mind, by combining *self-confidence* with disciplined study.

21. Now, you have heard a new

word: self-confidence! What does it mean? It means faith in your own strength, faith in your studies. The strong conviction that you would write the exams well, with a calm mind—this is self-confidence. If you can develop this, fear vanishes and enthusiasm springs up.

22. So, you have come to know many things now. If you understand them all, you can be sure of success. There is one final advice—you should keep reading this letter now and then. You must assimilate what all has been written here, before commencing your study. You should also check now and then whether you are regular in following these suggestions without fail.

May the Lord bless you to successfully pass your next exams with flying colours!

With love and best wishes,

Swami Purushottamananda

APPENDIX

Question: How best our time can be utilised with the help of a time-table has been explained in the letter. But even after sufficient study one may find some free time. How to spend this?

Answer: This is mostly a problem of intelligent students, because they can, not only study more in less time but also remember what they study. Such students can pick up some extra curricular hobby of their choice, like drawing and painting, music, dance, handicrafts or literature and pursue it. However, students who find it difficult

to pass the exams or those who pass with a third class, should better concentrate on their studies. Thereby a student who fails can at least pass with a third class, a student with a third class can pass with a second class and a student passing with a second class can secure a first class. If one can at least obtain a first class, college education at the higher level will be found easy. Normally those who manage to get only a third class in S.S.L.C. can be sure of failing in college! There may be exceptions, but those are very rare.

Question. If the average students are always to be engaged in studies, how can they ever have opportunities to develop their artistic and other talents?

Answer: They will surely have opportunities. They can do it, for example, during the Dasara holidays or the summer vacation.

Question: You have advised bathing twice a day and that too over the head. But it is impossible for girls to wash their hair every day; drying the hair becomes cumbersome.

Answer: Since the letter was addressed to a boy, this problem had not cropped up. But girls can take bath without washing the hair. It is enough if they wash their hair once a week. But hair should be oiled and combed every day.

* * * *

Other little questions may also arise while reading this letter. For

instance—the time-table cannot be adhered to during visits to other places or illness; what should be done when the lessons get accumulated? You must find out the answers to such doubts yourself. 'Where there is a will, there is a way.' If the urge to study is strong, such problems will never occur. Even if they do, you yourself will have to give thought to them and find the solution.

The situations that students may find themselves in are varied—

1. Those who are interested in studies will not have the necessary comforts; those who have comforts lack the interest to study.
2. Some have both the interest and necessary facilities.

3. There are some who lack both academic interest and facilities.
4. There are yet others who have both interest and facilities, but lack the intelligence.

The fact is that each one gathers knowledge in proportion to his capacity.

Now-a-days, it is said, even without passing exams one can manage to buy a certificate of merit. But unfortunately they cannot purchase merit itself!

Some students prepare well for the exams and yet answer the questions wrongly or unsatisfactorily. What can be the reason? Fear, panic! The result is haste, confusion; consequently, wrong answers.

There are students who manage to write correct answers for most of the questions in spite of the fact that they would not have studied much. The reason is only this—they have no fear. Therefore they experience no anxiety or haste. As a result they are able to calmly recollect whatever little they had studied.

Thus, fear makes the memory fail, while courage revives it.

Question: Why it is necessary to bathe twice? Is it practicable?

Answer: Upon waking in the morning after seven hours of sleep, one is still seen in the grip of drowsiness. If one waits for it to dispel by itself, it takes considerable time and that time is gone in vain. Some even lie down and go

to sleep a second time under its influence, while some others sit and drowse. How can students ever take up their studies in such a state? Hence, if one washes one's face, perform yogasanas (or exercises) and after a little while, takes bath, the dullness of sleep will vanish into thin air, leaving the mind and body refreshed and ready for studies.

Bathing in the evening is to wash away the crust of dirt that would have formed on the body, on account of the dust that settles upon the sweat, which would in turn have formed as we moved about throughout the day. In addition, one can clearly experience his mind being filled with a new zeal and enthusiasm.

However, a lot of time need not be wasted on bathing. If one is quick, it can be done in five to six minutes.

One must not forget that to be able to study with concentration, good hygiene of the skin is as important as the stomach's good health. Is it possible to concentrate upon studies if the body keeps itching all over?

Question: You have suggested to Somashekhar that he should sit in the very first bench. What if all those who read this letter flock to the first bench?

Answer: Is it not observed, that usually the back-benchers create noise, indulging in one or the other form of mischief? It was hence that this suggestion was given, so that sincere students may remain safe from such

troubles. If all the students read this letter and pay heed to the advice, all of them would remain disciplined in the class. Then it hardly matters where one sits!

This apart, another suggestion given to Somashekhar must also be considered—'Fixing your eyes and ears steadfastly upon the teacher, reflect upon his words attentively.' Indeed, if each and every student of the class acts according to this advice, undoubtedly a most wonderful consequence will result—the entire class will become quiet and serene. The undisturbed attention of all the fifty or sixty students in the class will be focussed on the teacher. If the teacher too is well-prepared, the teaching will be

highly successful and effective. But if the teacher is not well-prepared, he will surely get tensed up and start perspiring, upon beholding the quietude of the class. And he will determine to come better prepared for the next class.

Question: What should they do, who do not know how to perform yogasanas?

Answer: They must go in search of those who know. Moreover, it seems that exercises and yogasanas are telecast on the T.V. every morning. (We have no objection with regard to watching such programme on T.V.!) Of course, everybody knows about the state-wide and nation-wide yoga camps being conducted these days by the

Vivekananda Kendra, the Rastrotthana Parishad and other similar organizations. Also, people trained at these centres have spread themselves all over. Their help can also be sought.

Question: No doubt this letter contains many useful suggestions. But who will follow them sincerely?

Answer: Those who have the capacity to act upon the suggestions will certainly follow all of them. A few others will follow in parts. In the case of yet other students, parents can forcibly make them follow these regulations.

In scriptures like the Bhagavad-gita, much has been said about how men should conduct themselves. But how many actually live according to

those precepts? Hardly a handful! The same applies to this book too.

Question: How can concentration be cultivated?

Answer: Students, as well as spiritual aspirants keep on asking this question.

'Eka' is 'One'; 'agra' is 'tip'. Hence, 'Ekagrata' or 'concentration' implies 'being one-pointed', putting all resources together in one place. Concentration of the mind is bringing all the scattered mental forces together and channelising the attention towards one object or aim. If you ask whether our mind is not in a concentrated condition as it is, the answer will have to be 'NO'; because the mind is by nature, restless.

Added to this, the five senses

—ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin—constantly draw the mind's attention towards themselves. Since their pull is very strong, the mind ceaselessly flows towards the senses.

Apart from this, the mind has its own desires, whims and fancies. These are capable of drawing the mind out too. The senses co-operate with desires and make a fool of the mind until it becomes as distracted as a restless monkey. Can we expect such a mind to be concentrated?

How then, can the mind be held in equilibrium? How can the mind's energy, getting dissipated in all directions, be made to flow in one direction? The solution is to discipline it. Then how can it be disciplined?—this is the

second question. The mind should be advised to occupy itself with one object at a given time—'O mind, now I have to read and understand this lesson. So kindly do not disturb yourself with other thoughts but help me in assimilating this.' If, however, the mind does not pay heed to these soft words, you will have to be harsh and tell it sharply: 'O mind, you are my servant. You must listen to what I say.'

With all this, it is very important to lead a disciplined life. What is meant by a disciplined life? It means, doing all the work that is required to be done from morning till night fall, in an orderly and well organised way.

Also, bad thoughts should not be entertained; one must not indulge in

idle talk or useless activities. With all these precautions certain mistakes may occur. The mind should be admonished and advised not to repeat the mistakes. If the blunders occur again, the mind should be tutored again. Struggling thus, our actions will have to be systematised. When a daily routine becomes established, the mind will retain its poise to a large extent. Such a mind will be obedient and co-operative.

As already mentioned, the senses are capable of distracting the mind in every way. So they too have to be watched. Their demands have neither rhyme nor reason. Being attached to them, if we let them have their way, the mind which constantly stays with

them will be once again thrown out of equilibrium. Those who wish to control their minds should never foolishly pamper the sense-organs.

With the changing times, perhaps being influenced by the western civilization, students are increasingly letting their senses run wild. 'If not in the prime of youth, should life be enjoyed in old-age when one is more dead than alive?'—this is the seemingly logical argument of the youngsters. While they assert this smilingly, not many elders venture to impart wisdom and correct them. Hearing the multitude of youths forcefully declaring thus, perhaps even the elders have come to believe their assertion to be true!

Although the elders may remain

indifferent, the evil outcome will not remain ineffective. If the body, mind and senses are used whimsically without understanding their nature and workings, fearful effects will result which will destroy our peace, prosperity and contentment and reduce us to a pitiable condition. Then nothing will be in our hands.

The conclusion is this—uncontrolled sense-organs can destroy the concentration of the mind. The earlier this bitter truth is understood the better.

To develop concentration in studies, it is very important to understand the subject matter clearly before proceeding. As already said the meanings of difficult words in a sentence must be found out from a dictionary.

Their meanings and the idea being conveyed by the sentence as a whole, must be thought upon. Proceeding thus, a paragraph must be read and understood. Now, the contents of the paragraph, the meaning conveyed by it, must be reflected upon. This method of study gives a clear understanding of the subject; understanding gives joy, joy makes us love reading, love creates concentration.

Where our love is, there our mind dwells; so concentration develops in the object which occupies our mind—this is an unavoidable rule.

But there are students who ask, 'I do not like the subjects that I have to study. What shall I do?' Such students must either choose different

subjects of their interest or try to develop liking for the chosen subjects.

Yet another important concept is this—concentration of the mind is the result of perseverance and practise. ‘Practice’ is attempting repeatedly; it is constant effort. The practice of writing makes hand-writing beautiful; the practice of reading makes studies successful. A soldier must have practised sufficiently to hit the target with the bullet; a housewife should have practised sufficiently to cook efficiently. ‘Practice makes a man perfect’ is only too true, but practice should be done intelligently and with sincerity, faith and enthusiasm. How can concentration in studies not be achieved, with this sort of practice?

